

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	23 NOVEMBER 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	11
TITLE:	READING'S CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2013-2020; PERFORMANCE REPORT TO MARCH 2016		
SERVICE:	CORPORATE POLICY/ SUSTAINABILITY	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Reading's Climate Change Strategy 2013-2020 - 'Reading Means Business on Climate Change', was launched in Sept 2013, and sets out a vision for Reading to be at the forefront of developing solutions to climate change and for low carbon living to be the norm.
- 1.2 This report presents the progress against the targets in the action plans for the period April 2015 to March 2016.
- 1.3 The Climate Change Strategy seeks to develop activities that will lead to reductions in the carbon footprint of Reading Borough of 34% from 2005 levels by 2020. The latest local area carbon footprint data (2014) showed Reading's emissions have already reduced by 32% since 2005 (38% per capita). This is ahead of target, the best in Berkshire and amongst the best performing in the UK.
- 1.4 In Paris in 2015, the majority of nations on earth signed a global agreement to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases in order to limit global climate change to two degrees of warming. In line with this historic agreement, Reading is a signatory to the UK100 pledge, alongside over sixty five other Authorities including Manchester, London and Glasgow to commit to a shift to 100% clean energy by 2050.

- 1.5 There have been a number of key successes in the delivery of the Climate Change Strategy to date. Some of the highlights include; completion of a large solar panel project on Reading's Council housing, the start of the roll out of LED streetlights across the borough, a significant increase in the number of low carbon CNG buses added to the Reading Buses' fleet and the formation of Reading's first Community Energy Society.
- 1.6 The delivery of the Climate Change Strategy action plan is largely on track with 75% of all actions and 80% of Council actions rated as green or amber (on-track, complete or progressing but with minor delays/issues). The full performance report against all of the actions and targets is set out at Appendix A.
- 1.7 Overall there has been significant progress, but there are some areas where national policy changes have impacted delivery and/or timescales have slipped due to resource constraints.

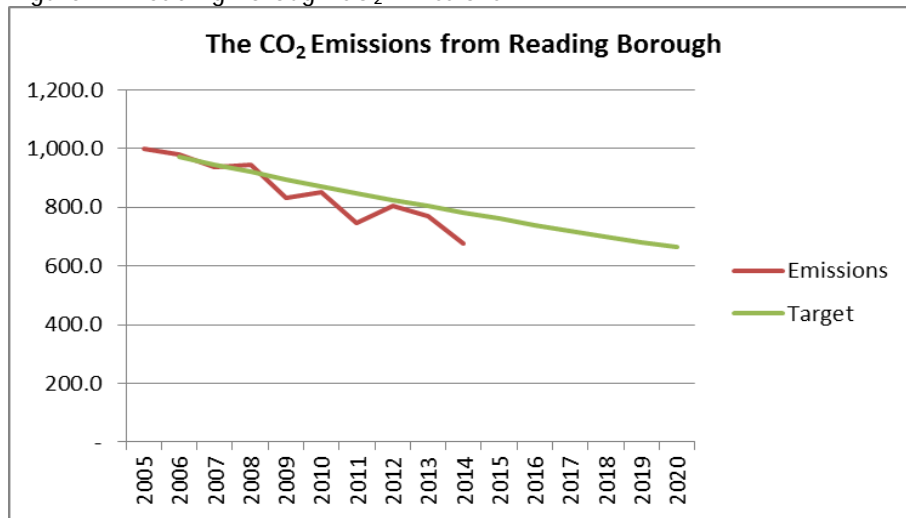
2.0 RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 To note the progress that has been made in the delivery of the Reading Climate Change Strategy 'Reading Means Business on Climate Change', for the period April 2015 - March 2016.
- 2.2 That the committee continue to support the Partnership in the delivery of the Reading Climate Change Strategy actions insofar as they are attributed to the Council.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Climate Change Strategy for Reading 2013-2020 (Reading Means Business on Climate Change), was developed through extensive stakeholder consultation and launched in Sept 2013.
- 3.2 The strategy sets out a vision for Reading for 2020, with low carbon being the norm in 2050. It proposes a target for the Borough as a whole to reduce emissions by 34% by 2020 (against a 2005 baseline).
- 3.3 The total emissions from the whole borough of Reading in 2014 were 32% less than 2005 and 38% less per head of population. This is the largest reduction of any borough in Berkshire. It was the 5th best per capita reduction reported in the Southeast (of 74 authorities). Reading had the 27th best per capita reduction in emissions of the 408 Local Authorities in the UK. Despite emissions rising in 2012, they reduced again in 2013 and 2014 and remain below the target level.

Figure 1 - Reading Borough CO₂ Emissions



3.4 The strategy also presents a set of strategic priorities which form the framework for the actions within each of eight themes. These key objectives are due to be reviewed this year.

3.5 The eight themes of the strategy are:

- Energy Supply
- Low Carbon Development
- Natural Environment
- Water Supply and Flooding
- Transport
- Purchasing, Supply and Consumption
- Education, Communication and Influencing Behaviour
- Community

3.6 'Theme leads' from a range of partner agencies (including the Council) volunteer to monitor the delivery for each theme chapter, in consultation with stakeholders. The theme lead positions for 'natural environment' and 'community' are currently vacant, which has led to a gap in reporting for those themes.

3.7 Detailed action plans, setting out how the strategic priorities will be delivered by partners, were published in November 2013. These include specific targets, measures and milestones for each action. The action plans constitute a three year rolling programme and are reviewed annually, with the first review having taken place at the end of 2014/15. The next review is underway and will be part of the more comprehensive review of the strategic priorities which will be carried out this year, at the mid-point of the strategy (2016/17).

- 3.8 Performance for the delivery of the April 14 - March 15 was reported in November 2015.
- 3.9 Although the action plans detail delivery by a range of organisations, a significant number of actions are being delivered by the Council. The Council's delivery within the strategy is generally embodied in existing Council policies such as the Carbon Plan, Local Transport Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 3.10 As part of the strategy, Reading Climate Action Network (RCAN), a wider network of organisations, businesses, communities and individuals, was also launched in September 2013. Members of RCAN seek to establish ways to meet the targets and aspirations of the strategy, committing to one of a number of possible challenges, including reducing their emissions by 7% a year. Two meetings are typically held per year, although there was only one meeting held in 2015/16 on 2nd June 2015. This meeting focused on energy and was attended by over forty people.
- 3.11 In December of 2015, the UK, alongside 195 other nations agreed to sign the global Climate Agreement in Paris. The Agreement seeks to reduce emissions to limit global warming by two degrees, with an ambition to seek to limit it to one and a half degrees. The agreement will come into force on the 4th November 2016.
- 3.12 In line with the Commitment made in Paris, the Council is a signatory to the UK100 clean energy pledge, alongside 66 other Local Authorities in the UK. An extract of the pledge is shown below.

We have the ambition of making all our towns and cities across the UK 100% clean before 2050, in line with the commitments made nationally and internationally at the Paris Summit.

We will take path to a new energy future. The world in Paris is coming together to create a new energy system – we are part of the change and we will create our own commitments to our own communities.

4.0 PROGRESS AGAINST ACTION PLANS APRIL 2015 - MARCH 2016

4.1 A RAGP (red/amber/green/purple) status¹ has been allocated to the actions in each theme action plan. The table below summarises the proportion of each type of action.

Figure 2 - Status of action within Reading Climate Change Strategy Action Plan at end 2015/16

	<i>red</i>	<i>amber</i>	<i>green</i>	<i>purple</i>
Energy Supply	0	7	12	0
Low carbon development	7	6	6	3
Natural environment	4	6	7	0
Water supply and flooding	2	6	7	2
Transport	0	4	20	0
Purchasing, supply and consumption	2	0	12	8
Education, Communication and Influencing Behaviour	4	7	6	0
Community	0	3	4	6
<i>Total (151)</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>19</i>
%age	13%	26%	49%	13%

¹ **Red** = significant issues with either delivery or resourcing

Amber = work progressing or due to progress but delayed/ not to original timescale; issues but not significant

Green = complete or no issues and on time

Purple - actions which are a good idea, but which are not yet developed or resourced

4.2 The Council is responsible for the delivery of 91 of the 150 actions within the monitored action plans. The table below summarises the proportion of 'red', 'amber', 'green' and 'purple' for actions for which Reading Borough Council is the lead deliverer.

Figure 3 - Status of action within Reading Climate Change Strategy Action Plan for which Reading Borough Council is the lead delivery agent at end 2015/16

	<i>red</i>	<i>amber</i>	<i>green</i>	<i>purple</i>
Energy Supply	0	4	9	0
Low carbon development	6	1	4	0
Natural environment	1	4	4	0
Water supply and flooding	1	3	4	0
Transport	0	4	16	0
Purchasing, supply and consumption	1	0	6	5
Education, Communication and Influencing Behaviour	3	5	1	0
Community	0	0	2	1
<i>Total (91)</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>%age</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>30%</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>7%</i>

4.3 There is limited information available on the progress for the 'natural environment' and 'community' themes, due to the theme lead roles currently being vacant. The theme lead for 'education' is new in the role this year.

4.4 Despite this, 75% of the total and 80% of Council led actions are being delivered (green and amber). The majority of these are on track ('green'). The following projects are particular successes to date:

- Completion of installation of solar panels on 457 Council houses
- Launching of Reading's first Community Energy Society
- A series of talks on climate change organised by members of Reading Climate Change Partnership were given by experts in Reading
- Groups of young people were given a tour of the Green Park turbine
- A mock Climate Conference was held in the Council Chamber with school pupils negotiating a climate deal.
- The Council commissioned its first biomass boiler at Cedar Court extra care home.

- A new fleet of CNG buses was commissioned reducing the per passenger carbon emissions further. A greater number of passenger numbers was also recorded on Reading buses.

Delivery Constraints

- 4.18 A number of actions have been designated 'red' (significant issues with delivery) or 'purple' (actions which are a good idea, but which are not yet developed or resourced) (14% red and 13% purple).
- 4.19 In many cases these actions were subject to government policy changes. The most significant of these were the abolition of the zero carbon standards (which is detailed further in the legal section) and the scrapping of the Green Deal. The removal of these policies significantly weakens the ability of local areas to reduce carbon emissions from their building stocks. The 'red' and 'purple' actions have therefore been considered by the Reading Climate Change Partnership Board and will be reviewed as part of the mid-term review of the strategy and strategic priorities which is currently underway.
- 4.20 The Council has had to make substantial savings in its budget due to the reduction in the grant settlement with central government. Accordingly, the Council has had to reduce its support to the Reading Climate Change Partnership board and the associated 'Reading Climate Action Network' (RCAN) activity. Despite this reduction in resources, the Council is responsible for the delivery of 91 of the 150 actions outlined in the strategy and continues to support the delivery of these actions and the running of the partnership and RCAN within its available resources. The partnership is in the process of establishing a modest resource to support their activities.

5.0 CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The Council has made a commitment to lead in tackling climate change in Reading, adopting the 2013-2020 Climate Change Strategy.
- 5.2 The Council's Corporate Plan sets out the following Service Priorities:
- Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable
 - Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy living
 - Providing homes for those in most need
 - Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active
 - Providing infrastructure to support the economy
 - Remaining financially sustainable to deliver these service priorities
- 5.3 The Climate Change Strategy sets out its strategic Priorities, which feed into all of these priorities, in particular through protecting those

vulnerable to fuel poverty and in creating a low carbon economy and infrastructure fit for the future.

6.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 Extensive stakeholder engagement, including two very well attended workshops, influenced the development of 'Reading Means Business on Climate Change' from the outset. Four meetings of 'RCAN' have also taken place since its launch.
- 6.2 A draft of the strategy was published for public consultation on 1st November 2012, running for six weeks until December 14th and was extended to February 2013.
- 6.3 The action plans were open for public comment via RGBN and RCAN websites (www.RGBN.org.uk and www.readingclimateaction.org.uk) in Autumn 2014. Responses have been considered as part of the annual review of the action plans.

7.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The implementation of Reading Means Business on Climate Change and associated carbon reductions benefits Reading's population as a whole by helping to mitigate the effects of climate change, as well as benefiting some sections of the population more specifically e.g. the education and skill level of those living and working in Reading will need to be raised in order to meet the demands of an expanding 'green economy'; this will enable people generally to play a fuller part in a more cohesive society.
- 7.2 Support is given to those who are struggling to afford their fuel bills through the Winter Watch project. Grant assistance is provided through the Green Deal's ECO funding, to enable those in fuel poverty who find it difficult to heat their homes to be able to afford work such as insulation so that their homes produce fewer emissions as well as being warmer.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Climate Change Strategy is a key policy adopted by the Council and the partnership is a 'theme partnership' of the Local Strategic Partnership.
- 8.2 Nationally, legal obligations in respect of climate change are incorporated into legislation through a range of regulations set out under the Climate Change Act 2008. The Reading Climate Change Strategy does not set out any specific binding actions in relation to these regulations but offers a multi-organisation framework which constitutes the proposals for the Borough to assist in meeting the national carbon budgets.

- 8.3 The low carbon development chapter sets out the intended course of action for planning policy development and obligations relating to the National Planning Policy Framework and the Building Regulations.
- 8.4 A significant change of policy was made by the government as a result of the housing standards review by a ministerial statement in 2015 which abolished the Code for Sustainable Homes. A Government paper after the 2015 general election also signalled that the intention to implement Zero Carbon Homes through a revision to the Building Regulations would be abandoned. Until any such revision, transitional arrangements that allow Reading to continue to apply the energy standards up to code level 4 in line with existing policies continue to apply. The strategy placed significant reliance on the Zero Carbon approach and therefore a number of failures to deliver are reported against the action plan in this chapter.
- 8.5 The Fuel Poverty in England Regulations 2014 set out the intention for all homes in the UK to reach the EPC standard of C by 2030. The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales Regulations) sets out the requirement for private rented properties to meet the standards from 2018.
- 8.6 The Heat Network Metering and Billing Regulations 2014 places obligations on the supply and sale of heat in buildings. This places obligations on the suppliers of heat, including to notify the government of potential sites.
- 8.7 Whilst a number of initiatives and investment proposals will be incorporated in the Climate Change Strategy Action plan, the obligations relating to the Energy Performance in Buildings Regulations, Carbon Reduction Commitment, Energy Efficiency Regulations and Energy Act are specifically addressed in the Carbon Plan 2015. This sets out the specific actions that the Council is intending to make in relation to its use of energy and fuel in its own estate operations.
- 8.8 The Home Energy Conservation Act and Energy Act set out the obligations on the Council to make provisions and plans to improve the energy efficiency of the housing stock within its area of control. This included stating the intended course of action in relation to the Green Deal (The Government's policy on retrofitting of buildings for energy efficiency). The Council published its updated HECA report in March 2015. The Green Deal has since been scrapped however, although the Energy Company Obligation will continue albeit with less funding.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The action plan will set out the actions that the Council and/or other partners will make to meet the strategy. Actions for which the council are the named lead delivery body have only been included where they have been identified as deliverable within the existing budget framework of the Council. In many cases actions depend on national policies that have yet to be passed into legislation.
- 9.2 The responsibility for climate change policy is held by the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee. The action plans will be reviewed annually, and the committee will approve any changes to ensure that delivery is consistent with the Council's policy and budget frameworks. Should amendments to the action plans require additional resourcing, beyond the existing budget framework then the revisions will need to be approved by full Council.
- 9.3 The financial implications of the delivery of the Council's actions in relation to energy management form a key element of the financial savings programme of the Council. Annual energy bills amount to around £4m including schools. This annual revenue expenditure is predicted to rise beyond inflation and therefore it is important to maintain investment and operational control on energy and fuel to enable significant reductions in energy consumption.
- 9.4 The delivery of the Council's actions in relation to energy management forms a key element of the financial savings programme of the Council. The Carbon Plan sets out the investment approach for the period 2015-20.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 The full theme performance reports are presented at Appendix A